

FLEETNESS AND ENDURANCE

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Rica) noted for his prowess in hunting. One hot afternoon he begged relief from his tasks, saying the spirit of catching a deer had hold on him; and he was excused on condition that the deer be brought entire to the rancho. Two hours later he was seen driving in a full-grown buck; on approaching the rancho the terrified animal turned this way and that, describing long arcs in wild efforts to avoid the human habitation; yet the hunter kept beyond it, heading it off at every turn and gradually working it nearer, until, at a sudden turn, he was able to rush on it; whereupon he caught it, threw it over his shoulders, and ran in to the rancho with the animal still struggling and kicking off its overheated hoofs. 224

Señor Encinas himself, with Don Andri's Noriega and several other attachés, vouch for the catching of a horse by a Seri hunter in still more expeditious fashion: one of the horses belonging to the rancho was exceptionally fat, and hence exceptionally tempting to the Seri band (and at the same time worthless to the vaqueros); the chief begged for it persistently until, wearied by his importunities, the ranchero offered the horse to the band on condition that a single one of them should catch it within a fixed distance (about 200 yards) from the gateway of the corral—and the offer was promptly accepted. With the view of making the test of fleetness fair, a vaquero was called in to frighten the horse and start him running around the interior of the corral, while a boy stood by to drop the bars at the proper moment, the Indian standing ready outside the gateway; when the animal had gained its best speed the bars were dropped and it bolted for the open plains—but before the 200-yard limit was reached the hunter had overtaken it, leaped on its withers, caught it by the jaw in one hand and the foretop in the other, and thereby thrown it in such manner as to break its neck. Knowing of these and other instances, L. K. Thompson, of Hermosillo, undertook arrangements for publicly exhibiting Seri runners as deer catchers at different expositions during the nineties; but his arrangements failed, chiefly because of the anticipated (and probably underestimated) difficulty of taming the Seri sufficiently for the purpose. [418]

About 1893, Señor Encinas and several attendants left Costa Rica one morning for Hermosillo, leaving at the rancho, among others, a Seri matron with a sick child nearly a year old; in the evening (as they learned later) the child was worse, and the matron took the trail about dusk, in the hope of finding a cure in the white man's touch or other medicine—and at dawn next morning she was at Molino del Encinas, 17 leagues (nearly 45 miles) away, with her helpless child and a pease offering in the form of a hare, which she had run down and caught in the course of the journey. And the matron, with children astride their hips and water-filled ollas balanced on their heads, and all their goods and chattels piled on their backs, habitually traverse Desierto Encinas from the sea to Costa Rica (some 30 miles), or from Costa Rica to the sea, in a night. [484]

Geographical Distribution

The Seri Indians live in two small Indian villages on the coast of the Gulf of California, State of Sonora, Desemboque and Punta Chueca. From there they frequently go to Isla Tiburón in the Gulf of California. [131] [484]

Approximately 35 Seri families live in Desemboque and 16 in Punta Chueca. Only in the first of these two places are there five "yori" (mestizo) families. [162] [563]

Sanitary Problems

The Seris have no defense against certain diseases which, like measles and flu, they acquire in their relations with the "yoris"; these diseases cause many deaths among the Indians. According to the an- [164] [731] [751]



Seri Indian woman of Desemboque, Sonora. Photo Henriette Yurchenco.

cient Seri Chico Romero, last Seri Governor, there was a great smallpox epidemic there about 1897 which caused the death of a third of the tribe which was living in Costa Rica, a small ranch on the coast of Sonora.

In 1955 measles appeared among the Seris, with a great number of victims, children and adults; the actions of the rural teacher Leo Sandoval, the Linguistic Eduardo Mosser and of the sanitation authorities of Hermosillo, succeeded in keeping the mortality rate down; nevertheless, the number of deaths reached 5% of the total native population. [165] [744]

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17. **San Lorenzo Island** — a narrow long island along the coast of Baja, California, and opposite to Tiburon. Altitude up to 1200 feet. Fauna limited, owing to the distance from the mainland. Vegetation much as elsewhere but impoverished. Visited incidentally as is San Esteban.

[312]

18. **Angel de la Guarda** — large island along the coast of the peninsula, longer but narrower than Tiburon, slightly lower at its highest point, pretty much waterless. Vegetation as elsewhere, fauna limited. Visited by the Seris very rarely.

19. **Desemboque (Mountains)** — high mountains immediately back of Desemboque, 5 miles away, rising perhaps to 1200 feet. Vegetation much richer than in Desemboque, with giant *Saguero* growing to considerable size. More moisture than immediately near the sea-shore. Full Sonoran fauna with cougar and bighorn. Frequently visited during hunts.

20. **Tepopa (Mountains)** — in distinction from Punto Tepopa as a whole, this refers only to the rugged head. The mountain reaching to over 1800 feet. Thus by Punto Tepopa are meant only the shores and the littoral.

[312]

21. **Buena Vista** — a ranch inland on the way to Hermosillo, newly deserted. Water present in the large well and periodically in the dry river. Willows, large mesquite, Palo Verde, etc. Now only incidentally visited by the Seris but formerly of some importance as a camp site.

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[361]

22. **San Francisco de Costa Rica** — a ranch inland halfway between Kino and Hermosillo near the main road, presently a large Mexican ranch. Formerly a frequent Seri campsite. The distinctive feature of this locality is extensive sandy areas with very peculiar fauna.

● [484]

23. **Hermosillo** — capital of Sonora of some 40,000 people. Extensive agriculture, irrigation, river and water-dammed reservoir and cattle and cotton ranges. Once the Seris ranged almost as far as this town but presently they come here only on special business, to the hospital or for a ride to town, with the Mexican truckers. Their observations in Hermosillo are only incidental.

[484]

24. **Nogales** — U.S.-Mexican frontier town. Seris come here very rarely and only certain individuals. Observations less than incidental.

[484]

[464]

25. **Campo Utah** — large track of irrigated flat lands given up to cotton, operated by the Utah Construction Company between San Francisco and Hermosillo. Somewhat off the main road. Selected as a distinct region owing to the irrigation and cotton fields with their ecological peculiarities. Seris visit this only in transit or on most unusual occasions when they work a few days for the Mexicans.

The Problem

121

The basic problem concerns the state of Seris' zoological knowledge, that is the general knowledge of the natural history of animals in its main outlines; of their ecology, habits, reproduc-

[P.28]

* 825 informants suggested that maybe the animals die with the onset of cold. But in such cases it does not occur to them to figure out how the species may carry on from the fall to the spring. The eggs, they know, usually are laid in the spring and if the adult dies off in the fall before depositing eggs, then what? To this Seri idea we have no answer. The usual reply is often "in winter not seen."

[805] But occasionally more specific beliefs are advanced, of which the most common is that the adult sits out the cold season underground (just as it may sit out the heat of the day or cool of the night, depending on its requirements). The toad thus "lives underground. It goes underground in October and comes out in May." It also "comes out when it rains and then it makes the noise—raurrau, rrau, rrau—the male and the female make it." The cold season, to the Seri, lasts from October till May and frequently May through October has been indicated as time of occurrence of the animal. Like the toad, the tortoise and the race runner disappear underground for the duration of the cold season and there had been a few feeble suggestions from the informants that the patch nose snake does the same. As for the sea turtles, they go to deeper waters for the winter. Nothing much of this sort had been said about the loggerhead turtle, undoubtedly owing to its extreme rarity.

Sometimes the informants went beyond mere statement of the absence or presence and indicated where the animal may be absent during either of the seasons. Thus, for example, the black whipsnake is common in Desemboque during the summer but very rare during the winter.

In some instances, association between rains and sudden activity is made. The tortoise and the toad both come with the rains, they thought.

b) Geographical

The appended table of the distribution of animals as seen by the Seris requires few comments. Four species had been described by the blanket statement "found everywhere" and this is indicated in the chart. But while it may well be true of the utas, very small and ubiquitous lizards, it is less likely to be true of the patch nose snake and the western diamond back. Unfortunately, the exact distribution of these reptiles in the area is little known, even in the islands of the Gulf. What basis there exists for the Seri statement is hard to tell.

On the whole, the distribution often reflects the Seris' acquaintance with this or that locality rather than peculiarities of the fauna. Hence, Desemboque, Kino and Tiburon are most frequently mentioned localities, while Punto Peñasco least, and these are really localities most and least frequently visited by them. But, in other instances, there is a real reflection of the natural situation. It is known that the fauna of Isla Patos is extremely limited and also that some species, chuckawalla, for example, are found on three of the larger Gulf islands toward the coast of Baja California, but not on the Sonoran side of the Gulf

[P. 27 B] $\frac{1}{2}$ [see category 116, p62. - Analyst.]

- * 825 analysis of the data given for the individual species. Where such data are available, for 21 species, fully 15 show preference for this kind of habitat and only six, it is said, prefer sandy bottoms. In many instances, such ecological preferences had been very emphatically pointed out and the informants denied that the animal lives over either rocky or sandy bottom, as the case might be. Geographical distribution has often also been indicated in the same manner, and explanation for the presence or absence of a fish in a certain place has been represented in just these terms. But this will be discussed later on. On the whole, the rock-loving fishes are all of the small species and economically not particularly important. The six sand loving species are:

Sphaeroides annulatus
Lythrus flaviguttatus
Myriichtys tigrinum
Mugil sp.
Cynoscion parvipinnis
Dairdiella incistius

There are a few more factors introduced into the ecological considerations. Sometimes ecological preferences had been indicated for the large and immature individuals of the same species. Thus the big *mero* "live in deeper water 25 meters or more deep" while the "little *meros* go to the Esteros." The large shark *pintura* is said to be absent from Desemboque because "it is too shallow there" and this presumably holds true also for other sharks. A similar situation pertains to the sting ray where the smaller individuals do come to the bank. Sometimes the fish may keep to the deeper waters but stay on its surface, and here, the Seris say, belongs the *caoveta*, a small fishlet, traveling about in countless schools.

Distribution

The distribution charts of fishes indicate in the main the Seris' familiarity with the coast. The locality near which they live or places where they fish show the great number of species listed by them as present. The further away from Desemboque and Tiburon, the fewer species are listed. The Seris do not go to the coast of Baja California to fish, hence no species are listed for it. Those that are marked so are the species which the informants included under a blanket statement "present everywhere." The basis for this kind of statement seems to be the frequency and numbers of fishes that are encountered.

On the other hand, there are a number of such records that are indicative of the ecological preferences and frequently a fish might be marked

[P. 37 A]

1 [see category 116 - pp 63-64.

- Analyst.]

* 825 during the warm season and are very rare during the cold time of the year. To this second category belong *Azius*, *Microphyrus*, *Petrolistes* and *Lep-
todius*.

Rhythm

There are no data on this subject among the Seris and there is no indication that the Seris believe in any differences in the amount of crustacean activity from daytime to night.

Ecology

Here there is more information because the Seris were able to provide ecological data of some sort for each of the species in the list. They pointed out that each of the species was exclusively a sea-dwelling animal and that the majority of them are associated with the rocky habitat. In fact, not one appears to be a sand dweller. The only exception is the mud-shrimp *Azius*, which animal they say (and in fact it does) lives in deep burrows in mud, some foot and half deep. All except the mud-shrimp and the barnacle live under rocks, the barnacle on the rock or on the marine turtle. All prefer shallow waters although some are also found in deeper waters. They walk under rocks but do not like to wander away and some do not even move much under rocks. The informants indicated that presence of some species in a given locality depends on the presence of suitable rock habitat. In addition to this, they credit *Callinectes* with a particular fondness of the Esteros.

Distribution $\frac{1}{4}$

Even from the small numbers of species it is clear that once more the general knowledge of the animal distribution is related to the frequency of visitations. The Seris' rare trips to the larger outer islands, San Esteban, San Lorenzo and

● [484] $\frac{1}{4}$ [see category 116 - 765 for distribution chart - Analyst.]

[P. 44 A]

* 825
[484]

Angel de la Guarda or to Guayamas and Punta Peñasco, result in little knowledge of the fauna and habitat, and for such localities they answer usually in a form of a question mark. On the other hand, localities with which they are well familiar, Kino, Desemboque, various places on Tiburón or Isla Patos and the Esteros between Kino and Desemboque, have to them then much greater fauna, and also the informants are able to state reasons why an animal may or may not be present. Again, we have the familiar explanation for the absence of certain creatures from Kino, "too sandy" or "no rocks." The mud-loving *Azius* they say is especially prolific in the muddy esterios of Estero Sargente, and in Tecamate it occurs only in one spot where there is mud. Finally, absence of *Leptodius* from the Isla Patos' shores is due to unusually turbulent waters, an explanation offered also for the absence from that spot of several marine invertebrates.

Anatomy

An interesting idea has been suggested in connection with the identification of the body parts in *Leptodius occidentalis*. (The informants correctly identified the mouth.) They also said that the animal has two eyes, no teeth, two legs and eight arms. The front enlarged legs (pincers) they think are legs, the eight smaller limbs behind them are arms. The reason for this division has been advanced, namely that legs are large and arms are small. This is yet in contrast with the real function.

Dangerous and Toxic

Not one of the crustaceans is considered dangerous or toxic. None have any venom. *Azius* and *Leptodius* bite mildly with their forelegs but do no harm. That is the extent of information I could get.

[P. 44 B]

123 nets of twisted fiber, hooked the nets in the ends of the notched
312 stick and started off nine or ten miles to the water hole in the heart
[492] of the mountains.

Water carried so far over loose, sandy soil, dodging cactus, threading a devious way among the talus thrown off the cliffs and slopes of canyon walls, with the water-bearer barefoot, acquires a value absolutely unknown to the man who draws an unlimited supply from a faucet.

The two men were gone six hours and when they returned they were almost staggering under the heavy loads of water, each man carrying at least one hundred and ten pounds of water, as the cans were full. In addition, one man had a canteen full.

The thirsty people drank sparingly, and a little Seri maid poured some of the precious liquid into a cooking olla for a thirsty dog. After the dog had lapped sufficient to allay his thirst, she carefully poured the residue back into the can, never losing a drop. One drop of water could not be spared after that arduous trip.

• 484 Bob says a man goes to Hermosillo occasionally and returns to the
147 coast, ninety miles, with two to five cans of aescal. It takes probably
648 four days to do it, but it is a wonderful feat of endurance. He said
about thirty years ago a woman walked the ninety miles during one
night, afoot, and reported to the Government House when it was opened
at nine in the morning that about fifty of her people had been shot
by Roberto's uncle at various times. This uncle was a very hard rough
man and the Seris were fond of his mares and steers for meat, and
used to steal, so he began shooting a goodly number. Fearing a man
messenger would be shot, as men were frequently shot while going along
the road, they sent a woman.

Ysabel was Governor at the time. Judgment was rendered against the uncle, and it is probable that a hanging squad would have been sent out to execute him. The Governor, a great friend of the family, sent for him, and he rode ninety miles at night on horseback and was saved with the Governor's help.

Roberto saw twelve Seris pack meat from two mares, two steers and two yearling heifers, for four or five miles to their boats. Their endurance and strength is phenomenal. The question naturally arises, "Why are not burros used by the Seris on the Island to ride and pack, as they are by their Mexican neighbors on the mainland?" It has been
[442] tried, but things were reversed; the Seris packed the burros around in their stomachs.

261 Roberto said: "These people, living on the verge of starvation,
242 never having a continuous food supply, would kill and eat every burro, and it is a common thing on the mainland, if a cow or horse dies, and Seris are in the neighborhood; they will try to beat the buzzards to it. They will gorge in times of plenty, and when food is scarce they

[text continues on p. 160]

123 We have given the Seris so much we are now short ourselves. Variety is very restricted. We haven't enough tin dishes or tools to go around, but that does not trouble us at all. All the cleaning is done in salt water and sand. Fresh water is only used to drink. Nothing else. We can't even take a shave. Not a drop of water. We are very lax in our personal toilets and appearance. We are barefooted always in the boat, as we have to wade to get the boat in deep water, and often the waves slosh on board.

This boat is made of a hollowed log twenty feet long and three feet, three inches wide, and she is very cranky. She almost upset with us several times. When everybody is placed in it, it is difficult to even change a posture without endangering everybody. She has no keel and leaks some, so we have to bail out often. But she is a good sea boat and rides the waves well if they are not too rough.

123 One evening we decided to get a message through to Juan Tomas, the Chief, some twenty or thirty miles distant. Herrera promised to go if we gave him twenty thirty-thirty cartridges. He would go one day and return the next, a round trip of about fifty miles. We gave him the message to tell those people we had a lot of things to trade for the things they use in every day life. Pelican skin kilts, bows and arrows, ollas, baby cradles, hair brushes and other interesting things. I had already made a trade with Blanco for his balsa, promising him sufficient lumber, nails and tools, to make a boat large enough to carry five men. This promise I fulfilled to the letter, and later on another expedition to Seriland I had the pleasure of sailing in this boat, which was well built and seaworthy. The unusual part of this bargain was that Blanco permitted me to deprive him of his only means (apparently) of making a living in hunting cohunas for himself and his family, freely and without hesitation, simply on my promise of lumber in the future. I was deeply touched by the trust reposed in me by this old sea rover.

322 These people are splendid mechanics with the crudest of tools--- rocks, fire, bones, knives. For instance, the pole of the harpoon was composed of five pieces of driftwood and a seagoing boat which I saw in Guaymas, captured by Mexican fishermen after killing the Seri crew, was composed of fully one hundred pieces of driftwood fastened with nails made of wire, and tied with fiber, and all the seams were filled with a black composition of native origin resembling pitch. Previous to the use of old iron, harpoon points were made of ironwood, but now iron is universally used.

283 I asked old Blanco for some of his native rope. He gave me some of it. He said they get the slender roots of the mesquite and peel the bark, and then the girls and women chew the fibrous wood. This is shredded and twisted into small two-stranded ropes. It is this rope, tied around and around, that holds the *carriso* balsa together.

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[284] I watched a woman make a basket. She used young branches from the terote tree, I think *terote blanco*. The bark was peeled and shredded into two parts, the heart taken out and kept separate. The coils of the round part were put in a pot of hot water to soften, and the edge of the basket was soaked a little in hot water. The center of the coils or woof consisted of six or eight strips of heart while the outer sap wood was woven around in regular coil-weave fashion.

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[286] A brad of deer shin-bone sharpened on pumice to a needle point was used as a brad. With this brad she split the fiber, held one piece in her mouth, and stripped the back down. Then she punched a hole in the bone brad, inserted the sharp end of the fiber and pulled it almost through. She then repeated the operation, adding a strip of heart once in a while. These baskets are coarse and unattractive, but they are hard and tough and stand heavy use.

323 Cooking vessels consist of two or three cooking ollas that nest together to facilitate transportation. These are made of coarse clay, solely for utility without regard for beauty of shape, color or design. In burning these ollas they use the shell of the sea turtle. [237]
[236] The cells of the shell are filled with a fine oil and this burns the ollas. On most of the other places on the mainland, the Indians use cow chips, or dried droppings to fire the clay.

203 We proposed to shift camp to Tinajanita, our first landing place, where Herrera was to meet us in two days with the Chief and some of his men. Since it was blowing, he said the men couldn't fish and they would be on land probably hunting, so he would be able to see them. 184
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[279] At this time they gathered *ascal* on an island off the west coast to make the liquor they used at fiestas, weddings and other celebrations.

Herrera left at five o'clock in the morning, with a swinging gait, for the opposite side of the Island. The distance around by boat would be fifty miles, and across, only about twenty or twenty-five---a full day's trip and hard, as mountains would have to be crossed and the rocks were sharp and the way difficult.

123 We had breakfast on rice and bread. Our rations are running low and we expect to move this morning. We made arrangements about the native boat and saw Blanco trot off with two five-gallon cans for water, a distance of ten miles. We went to the camp to get a few things---an old basket, a Pelican hide and other things, and then we asked the help of everybody to get the boat down to water---the tide was very low. The one man, the women and five of us were required to drag and push the boat to water.

We waved goodbye, loaded her up and then rowed against the tide and wind for miles, and finally landed in a lovely sheltered lagoon, built our fire and had lunch. A few crabs were speared, and late in the afternoon the wind shifted. We loaded the boat again and pushed off for Tinajanita, our first landing place. After rowing, we raised

[Text continues on p. 174]

123 It was a beautiful morning in early May, and the water was still
 [202] as a pond, reflecting all the sunrise tints like a mirror. After a
 breakfast of clams and broth, bread and sand and bronco tea, we made
 a big smoke and were answered by a similar smoke two miles off, so we
 knew our friends were on the way.

123 In one hour they began trailing in, the women each with a load on
 492 her head, walking graceful and erect. On one head was an inverted
 [415] turtle shell containing nearly all the family belongings done up in
 rags. On the top was the most precious belonging of all---the rifle.
 The man carried two or three ollas and other things on a shoulder
 stick. Everything necessary for their home was carried on their
 heads.

123 Soon the Indian Blanco was seen paddling in his balsa; he also
 had a load and had paddled all the way from Ironwood camp against
 wind and sometimes tide. As they were all very thirsty we gave them
 water around. They immediately went to the shore as it was low tide,
 and began gathering small oysters from the rocks. Soon each woman
 returned with a half bushel of them on her head.

About three o'clock and for an hour or so thereafter, Antonio
 Herrera, the Chief's son Chico, the old Chief Juan Tomas, two other
 men and one woman, came drifting into camp with their dogs. Each one
 was loaded with things. They were a pretty wild looking bunch. There
 was very little food and little water for so many.

648 The Chief said that a day or two before, some of his men had a
 731 fight with some sailors (Mexicans) on the Island of San Estevan four
 or five miles off the south west corner of Tiburon. Nobody was killed,
 but the two boats, the wealth of the Island, had drifted away and
 were lost, leaving eight men marooned on the Island. They had gone
 there to gather mescol to make drink to celebrate a wedding to come
 off soon. Three men were five days without water. They sent up frantic
 smoke signals every day. At last they were seen, and help went for
 them in the only remaining boat on the Island. They were rescued.

648 The Chief and his men and women, with us, are going to Hermosillo
 • 484 ninety miles afoot with all their belongings to ask the Government
 123 for food and help.

142 The Chief looks to be seventy years old, a grim dark-skinned in-
 [227] dividual with a thin fringe of hair on his upper lip, broad nose,
 wide nostrils, small black eyes. He is well-built and erect. None of
 these that I have seen so far have any fat. They are lean and sinewy.
 [302] The young men are of large build, high cheek bones, some with hair on
 [397] their lips, their long black hair braided; sometimes with a strand of
 red worked. All were either barefooted or wore sandals. I saw one
 pair of sandals made out of turtle hide; another of burro hide.

648 When the Chief arrived, the sail of a vessel was seen over the
 123 beach. Bob recognized it as belonging to a launch of a Yaqui Indian

[text continues on p. 180]

464 Last year the Seris and their families worked on the ranches
454 gathering corn and beans and made three thousand pesos, and then they
484 came to town to spend it. They go back and forth much more than they
used to.

123 We ate supper with Mrs. Thomson and then we went to the Plaza to
watch the carnival. Much confetti and *cascaroni* was thrown on boys
and girls, and the square was thronged by a mass of weaving people,
while the military band played seductive Mexican pieces.

The next morning after breakfast we started shopping and kept at
it all day, purchasing things to trade with the Indians and groceries
for them and ourselves.

While at one of the stores six or eight Yaqui Indians, from their
town about one hundred and thirty miles distant, came to buy things
for the Easter period. This is the one big fiesta of the year for
them. The women were bare-footed and the men wore rawhide sandals.
One Yaqui soldier came with them, and he wore three belts of ammu-
nition. They were very dark, with short hair. Rather gaunt, fierce,
striking faces.

We walked into a cigarette factory and saw them manufacture ciga-
rettes by machinery. Four machines were running, turning out one hun-
dred and sixty each per minute. Altogether, twenty-three thousand
packets of fourteen each every eight hours. These packets are usually
tied together in the shape of a solid wheel, one hundred packets each
called a *ruedo*, or wheel.

After dinner we went to Roberto's house and they told us there
that the Indian boy Pascual had gone out alone and was lost. The Cap-
tain left to hunt for him and later brought him in, and then he went
out to hunt for us. We finally saw him on a side street and sent him
home to his dinner.

Last night, Roberto said they slept up till midnight, then waked
up, opened the bride's bundle, and gloated over the bright colors.
Later on they opened it twice again. Then they sang and talked for a
while before going to sleep again.

On the following day it was nearly three in the afternoon before
we got the car repaired and all supplies on board, including our
blankets and grips and lumber for a Seri *balsa*, or boat. This was a
heavy load for the Ford truck besides five men, which included the
two Indians. Every item had to be considered---food for ourselves and
the Indians, all the trade things, lumber for a boat and tools to
make it, gas, oil, cans for water and many other things.

We soon left the city behind and rattled through the outskirts of
poor adobe or stick mud houses, many half in ruins but still shelter-
ing some family.

After about fifteen or twenty miles we arrived at one of Rafael
Ysabel's ranches, *Europa*, where Senor Felix is the foreman or *Nayer*

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225 so all the other flies could see and also come to this dead thing."

787 A few weeks ago, Antonio Herrera had a very vivid dream. He dreamed
[198] that he was hunting in the mountains for deer and came across a cave. (These volcanic mountains are pitted with caves.) He went into the cave and saw all kinds of things dear to the heart of a Seri---plenty of rifles, lots of cartridges, knives, *santa* (unbleached cotton), necklaces, red bandannas, blue overalls, *plate*, or silver, and many other things.

[55] When he awoke he sought his father Manuel Encinas, who is a medicine man and interpreter of dreams, to explain his dream to him. The price demanded by Manuel was six *tiras*---or 30-30 cartridges, a very high price, according to Seri standard. The explanation was this:

It was true that the cave was there and all the things in it just as seen and described by Antonio, but in order to find it he would have to fast nine days and go without water that length of time also, in the heat of summer. Then the way would appear to reach the cave. So far, Antonio has not attempted the fast.

381 I witnessed the operation of making a certain kind of pitch or
396 tar which the Seris use to make the seams in their canoes or boats tight. The women pound up the dried pulp next to the outside skin of a dead *pitshella* cactus (organ cactus). This is very dry and brown in color and the pieces are pounded up to a dry powder with a wash or shore rock in a dried deer hide. This is placed in a *batello*, or flat basket, and manipulated so that the coarse pieces come to the top and are scraped off and thrown away. The fine powder is then put in a five gallon can and some porpoise or sea-lion oil or horse oil is poured on it and stirred into a thick gummy mass. When thoroughly mixed it is put over the fire, in an olla, to boil and continually stirred for an hour or two until it is the consistency and has the appearance of coal tar. While being worked it is kept heated and applied to seams inside and outside the boat. It hardens just like tar and answers the same purpose.

123 Since the corn, which had kept this band of Seris in food, disap-
225 peared two days before we came, and they had barely kept going on
[88] seeds and a few fish, and they all had decided to leave camp with us in the morning---the women walking and the men and some children in boats---it was necessary to supply them with some food to take them to the hunting grounds of the *cahuaca*, or sea turtles, and land them on the Island. The *cahuaca* would furnish them meat---their favorite and national food, and the shores would supply them with clams, oysters, crabs and other sea food.

123 So the whole band was called around our camp and each family was furnished with two cups of corn, two of beans, some green coffee and a cup of cube sugar. For the first time our camp was free of Indians, and we ate and went to bed in peace.

The amenities of civilization were laid aside and forgotten in

123 our rough camping, and we lived more or less like the natives, along the lines of least resistance. Shaving was unknown; washing the hands took place possibly every few days---the face never; teeth never; hair combed never; dressed, always in bed and out. We did not shed our shoes. Our revolvers were our constant bedfellows and lay in the blankets next to our right hands. But the Seris have never made a move to take the least thing that was not given to them, and made not a hostile move or look. I did see a child surreptitiously wet his fingers and wipe them across the open flour sack and lick them off, but even then his mother pulled him back.

123 By starlight the next morning we were up again, and ate our breakfast before sun-up. We loaded most of the groceries and things in our boat, including about eighteen gallons of water. Besides ourselves, we took Luis Torres and his wife as helper and boat-steerer. This gave us a very heavy load. Chico Romero planned to take twenty gallons of water and one sack of flour and half beans and corn, and follow in his boat.

The Seri camp was a busy place, women carrying things to the boats and preparing to leave. The camp was stripped. Much water was taken in the boats to supply the families, who for the most part walked along the shore and made short cuts through the hills, planning to meet the boats at appointed places. Two other boats started with us.

[50] The wind was dead ahead, so our sail was useless and we unshipped the mast, and three of the men took the long oars with Luis Torres at the helm and in the bow. The boat leaked quite a great deal and it kept Lupp busy-bailing. Chico Romero's boat was manned at the oars by two small boys about seven or nine, and he steered with a paddle. In the other boat were three men at the paddles, three children, two dogs, cans of water and baskets and cooking things.

[50] The wind kicked up quite a heavy sea for the small Seri craft, but this narrow, heavily-laden craft met the swells and floated over them gracefully, although oftentimes the water missed coming over the gunwale by an inch or two. The children laughed gleefully, showing even rows of white teeth innocent of brush and tooth powder.

123 On rounding one rocky point three deer stood outlined against the sky, and we landed three men to try and get one, Stan among them. They returned empty-handed, except Stan, who kept ashore and followed over the hills to try for game.

At noon we landed on a beautiful sandy shore laced by the green waters of the Sea of Cortez, with Tiburon Island opposite a few miles distant. Here we unloaded and built a fire of driftwood and cooked our dinner. Stan found us---without his deer---and we ate very heartily. Beans, bread, coffee. We camped here for the night in this delightful little cove, calm and protected from the strong wind outside. Green sea, purple mountains, cloudless blue sky, a little freedom from hordes of staring Indians.

123 Then Chico Romero and his load of children and dogs arrived and
484 he unloaded his impedimenta on the beach, and soon the women came
walking along the beach and joined the party. The boats carrying the
heavy things and children; the women, with their babies and a few
light things on their heads, walk along the beach when possible and
follow the boats, which hug the shore to avoid the strong currents
and tide. The boats are propelled by paddles mostly, though some of
the Indians use oars. The women are slightly built, slender and in-
501 clined to be gaunt, owing to the hard life and lack of food. Their
142 cheek bones are quite prominent and their profiles present protruding
lips.

422 Having no permanent homes, moving hither and thither for their
[36] various food supply, household things are not accumulated and life is
reduced to its very simplest elements and absolute necessities.

Crude baskets made from shoots of the terote tree, vessels in
which to cook, and some patched rags in place of Pelican skins to
serve as blankets to the fortunate few, constitute the family pos-
sessions. Strange to relate, many of the women have an over-supply of
281 milk, and according to Roberto have puppies nurse what the babies
[35] cannot take. One woman was known to nurse a baby pig on one side and
a puppy on the other.

[247] Family dogs lick all cooking vessels which is unnecessary as they
[309] are thoroughly clean when the Seris are through with them, and also
lick the infants clean after performing their natural functions, so
they are quite indispensable. I saw a Seri girl place on the sand a
small can of water for a dog and then saw her drink some of the re-
mainder and pour the rest back in a five-gallon can. Dogs frequently
swim across the Infernillo to join their masters.

732 . Asked about cripples and incompetents, Roberto said they probably
did not exist. The conditions of survival were too precarious to admit
of anyone living who was unable, by physical disability, to hunt or
fish. There are two or three men who are nearly blind or so. The
wives of these men eke an uncertain living for them by the hardest
262 struggle. The sea turtle is the staple; one man and one good boat can
483 secure a living for five families. There are now nine boats, but one
501 boat to a family would practically free them from continual want.
262 With the exception of four bones in the flippers and the bones of the
237 head, all the sea turtle is used---the meat, blood, entrails, shell
which furnishes food and oil, skin of flippers which furnishes sandals,
sineu for strings. Nothing is wasted except contents of the entrails.

123 Again, we laid our blankets on the clean white sand of the shore
and were lulled to rest by the murmuring sea.

123 Daylight found us up the next morning, and we breakfasted, rolled
484 up our blankets, pushed the boats into the sea and were off by the
time the sun rose over the mountains and shone over a glassy sea. Two
Seris towed their boat by a tump line, while a boy of twelve steered

123 it from shore by a paddle. A little child in the boat sat still as a
484 mouse. No matter how the boat rocked, it never whimpered or cried. All
the children stayed perfectly quiet in the frail crafts, in the very
positions in which they were placed.

123 Once the boat approached shore to secure a small octopus for fish
484 bait. One was finally located by Stanley, who could see its eyes
136 shining with a baleful purple light under a large boulder in about
120 eighteen inches of water. The Seri got out and pinned it down with an
oar, while Roberto pounded it time and time again with another oar.
Even then it escaped in a cloud of sepia which it discharged. Its
tentacles were easily a foot in length, and its color was the bottom
of the sea. If it once gets a grip on a rock it is practically im-
possible to tear it loose.

Schools of porpoises played close to the boat each day, curving
up to breathe and throw spray and then diving lazily below the sur-
face, frequently gliding like a dark shadow below the waves. Some-
times, in the sheer joy of living, they would leap clear of the water
and splash back in a spray of foam.

123 We soon reached the extreme point where it juts from the Sonora
484 shore, landed and set a signal smoke to notify other Seris on the
120 Island. (A dry pitchahilla cactus was selected for a black smoke.) No
answering signal came. We crossed the narrow channel, the Infernillo,
a little over a mile wide, the water like a mill pond, and landed on
the sheltered side and unloaded on the stony beach. For miles the
beach was covered by windrows of round wave-worn rocks and pebbles of
all beautiful colors and sizes mingled with strange shells and sea-
weed. Here we made camp and stayed overnight.

The Indian canoe landed its cargo of women, children and dogs a
little later, and established a camp adjoining. Three little boys were
commissioned to secure us some clams and they returned in a while
with a pail of clams, one crab and some oysters. These were boiled in
salt water, the meat extracted and Pancho Oliverria cooked them in
rice for supper. The crab was my especial delicacy.

123 Roberto and Stanley walked off after dinner to hunt in the moun-
tains a few miles back from the coast, and they returned, long after
dark very weary from carrying, for seven miles, a young burro deer
which they had shot. The Indians soon gathered around it thattering
volubly, as both they and ourselves had eaten no meat for several
days. We gave them nearly three-fourths of it, reserving a hind quar-
ter and some ribs for ourselves. Rafael Felix and Chico, with skill
born of long practice, skinned and unjointed the animal in a very
short time, and devoured a good part of their share in a cooking pot
a little later, although they had eaten only a little while before.
The boys cracked the bones and scraped the marrow, eating it like
candy.

[484] At six thirty the next morning, we were crowded in the boats again

123 and on our way, headed south, rounding the point with the tide in our
494 favor. It was a rowing proposition. During mornings the sea is calm
and the swells glassy. Usually at noon the wind comes up, mostly ahead
and against us. Last night we could see the light of a camp fire on
the point opposite us, and soon we spied a boat headed for the island.
We had left the women and older children to walk and they met us where
we landed. At noon we camped for dinner in a lovely cove, and soon
three other boats joined us with their cargoes of women, children and
dogs. We ate quickly and got under way again as soon as possible, and
even then we were the last boat. The trip was bad, as all the people
were loaded in the boats which made them low in the water.

123 It was a pretty sight to see the Seris in their pangas, boats
494 shaped like dories, graceful, narrow and swift, kneel in the bottom
504 and dip their broad paddles into the waves and shoot into the open
sea like dark-skinned Vikings, wild hair flying.

As soon as we emerged from the cove the wind and tide struck us
dead ahead, and progress was slow although the swells were behind us.
After rounding a point the wind blew on the forward quarter and all
the boats, now increased to five, hoisted their sails. We also stepped
our mast, sheeted our flour-sack sail, and bowled through the sea,
carrying a bone in our mouth.

Chico's boat ahead had no sail and when we neared it, steered
with superb skill by the wild-looking Seri, Luis Torres. He had a tow
line aboard and thereafter we held him in tow until finally the wind
shifted dead ahead and all the boats lowered their sails, unstepped
their masts and began paddling. One panga had a sail with part of it
loose and flapping at the top like a flag. Roberto said the Seris did
not want to cut off this useless piece for fear of spoiling the sail,
so there it flapped whenever the sail was sheeted home.

123 About three thirty in the afternoon we rounded a bold rocky point
494 and entered a beautiful curving bay of quiet water, and here we landed
for the night camp. Soon all the boats were unloaded. Men and children
hunted driftwood for camp fires, two boats at our insistence set off
fishing, and Stan and three Seris took their rifles and went hunting.
All parties later returned without fish or game, so, as our meat had
disappeared like a beautiful dream, we had to dig into our corn and
flour to feed thirty or forty hungry Indians. The children stood about
like a bunch of hungry cormorants and we promised them *pinole*, or
flour paste.

123 Looking at these half naked children with their swarthy little
177 bosoms bare and most of them bare from the waist down, I dug out some
safety pins and began with the little girl Luz, who was vigorously
stirring the paste mass and pinned her waist over her bare breast and
tummy with two bright safety pins. She never ceased stirring. Each
bare breast I pinned the shirt over as the night was chilly. The
children quick to catch on and keen with desire born of privation,
each pulled his or her shirt open even when it had a button, or had

[622] This passed a very striking character among the primitive races of Sonora, Mexico. He was brave and fearless in battle; crafty, cautious, and cunning in attack; cruel and merciless to his enemies. He was rarely caught off his guard, and always managed to extricate himself and his men from difficult situations. He was quick to think and act, and was wise with the wisdom learned at first hand on desert and sea from a rugged nature, reluctant to give up her secrets. He was a master hand at balsa building, a good hunter, fisherman, harpooner of cahuana (sea turtle), a good surfer, a good gambler, and an expert tracker. It was not unusual to possess two or three wives, but the old Chief, while married three times, had only one wife at a time. He was quite fond of the writer, and used to greet him with the true Mexican abrazo.

[123] It was in 1922 that I first met the grim old warrior on the shores of Tiburón, whither I had gone on a quest for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

[142] He was very dark, of medium height, thick set, with a broad, deep chest, very muscular, with shaggy brows and deep set eyes which, even at that age, ninety years, burned like coals of fire, and were suspicious and wary. He wore a braided pigtail down his back which contained a few gray hairs. For clothing, he wore a ragged shirt and an old pair of overalls, with a short kilt hanging from a belt, through which stuck a long naked knife of hoop iron, ground on abrasive rocks and keen as a razor.

[291]
[419] From infancy to the grave, the freedom of his feet was never hampered by shoes. Even at that advanced age, and until his last illness, he was perfectly able to care for himself, and follow his nomadic tribe on its devious trails along the coast and far in the interior. A walk of a hundred miles was not unusual. For ten rifle cartridges a Seri Indian once walked forty or fifty miles to deliver my message to Juan Tomas. From the time we first met, our friendship was never broken.

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FIG. 1. Area of Present Seri Occupation

One descendant of this band states that long ago his ancestors wandered north from the region of Guaymas. Eventually, they established land rights to the coastal area extending from Campo Ona on the south to Puerto Lobos on the north. Before long, however, they relinquished claim to the area between Campo Ona and Punta Tepapa.

It is to be understood, of course, that groups from this band, as well as groups from other bands, at times ranged far afield from their respective territories. Band I, for instance, had campsites as far north as the mouth of the Colorado River.

BAND V

642 These people were apparently hunters, gatherers, and fisher-
 [226] men. It is said that they speared fish from the shore since they
 [501] did not use balsas. They too apparently raided the ranches. Their
 [721] warring nature has already been discussed; it resulted in the
 [592] acquisition of few friends. However, several marriages between
 [628] members of this band and members of subdivision 2 of Band III
 are said to have occurred.

BAND VI

[131] The members of Band VI lived on San Esteban Island and
 [342] were the most primitive of the tribe. They lived in huts made of
 [501] driftwood and in caves and made extensive use of the balsa.
 [411] Although they did not have the bow and arrow, they did become
 [262] expert in the use of the spear. The people depended mainly on a
 seafood, iguana, and maguey diet.

621 Perhaps it was due to the confined living space on the small
 628 island with the accompanying lack of fresh water that relations
 578 between the four subdivisions were precarious and fights broke
 [157] out frequently. The Seri today stress the fact that the members
 of this band were impetuous and unpredictable.

642 Their relations with the other bands were generally good
 [574] however. Seri from Band III were free to visit San Esteban where
 [225] they were well treated.

• [484] The San Esteban people seldom traveled to the mainland,
 [191] and, since they spoke no Spanish, it is probable that they made
 [648] no peaceful contact with non-Seri groups.

COLLAPSE OF THE BAND SYSTEM

642
 628 Internal strife in the Seri tribe was probably a major factor
 578 in the establishment of the band system. External strife was a
 648 major factor in its downfall.

[021] Reference has been made to the plundering, killings and
 rustling of cattle to which certain of the bands were dedicated.
 The concern of the Sonora government was aroused, and steps
 were taken to crush the rebellious groups. According to the
 present-day Seri, military action by army units and rancher out-
 fits against the various bands resulted in the near-destruction of
 the whole tribe.¹¹